

military to the border of Ukraine. They feel empowered because they are able to have a pipeline that President Biden okayed but that America was denied.

We watch China pressure Taiwan even further.

Madam Speaker, we still have Americans stuck in Afghanistan.

Madam Speaker, it is just a little more than a week away from Thanksgiving when millions of Americans will gather together. But those events may be smaller because they may not be able to afford the gas to drive to see their family. They may not be able to afford the most expensive Thanksgiving dinner they have ever had. They are looking to Washington to do better.

Madam Speaker, the worst thing possible we could do is not to listen to them. They have spoken loudly, and they have spoken clearly that the path that we are on is wrong. They cannot afford it; they cannot accept it; and they expect us to do better.

But an idea to rush a bill this large and not have any analysis and to think the American people won't understand it—they have watched what happened this year under one-party rule, and on Tuesday, they said that will change. I just hope, Madam Speaker, that this body listens and waits for the report because they will not be able to justify a "yes" vote for it.

America cannot afford it. For the good of the country, let's take ahold of it, and let's defeat this bill.

RECOGNIZING BRENT'S FIREHOUSE COFFEE

(Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the generosity and Iowa nice spirit of a couple from my district.

Recently, Brent and Amy Brightman, the owners of Brent's Firehouse Coffee in Camanche, presented the Camanche Police and Fire Departments with \$2,000 each in what they hope to be the first of an annual donation to their city's first responders.

When asked about the generosity of their donations, Brent, who has served as a volunteer firefighter in Camanche for over a decade, said that they started Brent's Firehouse Coffee not only to support their community but to support first responders.

Iowa has some of the best businesses and first responders, and I am beyond proud to see our community come together to support one another.

I thank Brent, Amy, and the first responders of Camanche for their continued and unwavering service to our community.

ALARMING RATE OF INFLATION

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Madam Speaker, as if things could not get any worse under this administration, we found out last week that inflation is now at a 30-year high. This comes as Americans are worried about the cost of Thanksgiving dinner, the cost of putting gas in their cars, and even the cost of heating their homes for the winter.

Under this administration, inflation has metastasized at an alarming rate across the country. Every small town in America feels the strain of inflation. Every American family feels it. Every hardworking taxpayer feels it. Yet, this administration is too blinded by its own ignorance to figure out what is happening.

Madam Speaker, it is clear that the so-called Build Back Better agenda was just a lie this entire time.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 20 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1700

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BOWMAN) at 5 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which the yeas and nays are ordered.

The House will resume proceedings on postponed questions at a later time.

STUDY ON DISPARITIES ASSOCIATED WITH RACE AND ETHNICITY WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN BENEFITS ADMINISTERED BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 1031) to require the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study on disparities associated with race and ethnicity with respect to certain benefits administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 1031

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE STUDY ON DISPARITIES ASSOCIATED WITH RACE AND ETHNICITY WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN BENEFITS ADMINISTERED BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) STUDY REQUIRED.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct a study—

(1) to assess whether there are disparities associated with race and ethnicity with respect to—

(A) compensation benefits administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs;

(B) disability ratings determined by the Secretary, with specific consideration of disability evaluations based on pain; and

(C) the rejection of fully developed claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary; and

(2) to develop recommendations to facilitate better data collection on the disparities described in paragraph (1).

(b) INITIAL BRIEFING.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General shall brief Congress on the initial results of the study conducted under subsection (a).

(c) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 240 days after the date on which the briefing required by subsection (b) is conducted, the Comptroller General shall submit to Congress a final report setting forth the results of the study conducted under subsection (a), including the recommendations developed under paragraph (2) of such subsection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on S. 1031.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 1031. To build a better, more welcoming, and more equitable Department of Veterans Affairs, we must take a hard look at how VA can earn back trust. Too many veterans have experienced barriers to receiving the benefits that they have earned from service to our country.

I believe that VA care and benefits must be distributed fairly to all eligible veterans, regardless of social or physical disparities. That is why we must look back to document whether veterans have been unjustly denied benefits, address the root causes of disparities, and ensure equitable treatment moving forward.

Such an important evaluation will certainly require digging into vast datasets, evaluating agency processes, and laying the framework for meaningful recommendations to effectively make any needed course corrections at VA. That is why this bill mandates that the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office perform this examination.

Under Senator RAPHAEL WARNOCK's legislation passed by the Senate, GAO would study racial and ethnic disparities regarding VA compensation benefits, including VA disability ratings and rejections of fully developed claims for benefits under laws administered by VA.

The VA Secretary would brief Congress within a year after passage of the bill and then prepare a report that includes recommendations to address identified disparities.

The companion legislation I sponsored, H.R. 3856, was approved by the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, and I am pleased to support Senator WARNOCK's legislation today. I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 1031, sponsored by Senator RAPHAEL WARNOCK. I would also like to recognize Chairman TAKANO for leading this effort in the House.

As you all know, when the men and women of our military sign up to serve, we make a promise to care for them upon their separation, regardless of age, ethnicity, race, or gender.

The Veterans' Affairs Committee has heard concerns from veterans who say that they have been treated unfairly in the VA benefits system based on their minority status. However, we have no objective data to determine whether there is a bias against the minority groups in the VA through the claims process.

S. 1031 would help address this question by requiring a GAO study to determine whether any differences exist in the way the VA administrators compensate benefits based on the veteran's background. This report would provide Congress and VA with the information we need to determine what biases exist and, if so, how to address them.

I support S. 1031, and I hope that my colleagues will do the same.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I am prepared to close. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to support the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I, again, ask all of my colleagues to join me in passing S. 1031, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 1031.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

HIRE VETERAN HEALTH HEROES ACT OF 2021

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 894) to identify and refer members of the Armed Forces with a health care

occupation who are separating from the Armed Forces for potential employment with the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 894

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Hire Veteran Health Heroes Act of 2021".

SEC. 2. IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES WITH A HEALTH CARE OCCUPATION FOR POTENTIAL EMPLOYMENT WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DURING SEPARATION FROM THE ARMED FORCES.

Section 207 of the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017 (Public Law 115-46; 38 U.S.C. 7401 note) is amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 207. IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES WITH A HEALTH CARE OCCUPATION FOR POTENTIAL EMPLOYMENT WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DURING SEPARATION FROM THE ARMED FORCES.

"(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, shall establish a program to identify and refer members of the Armed Forces with a health care occupation for employment with the Department of Veterans Affairs during the separation of such members from the Armed Forces.

"(b) REFERRAL OF INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—If a member of the Armed Forces identified under subsection (a) expresses an interest in working in a health care occupation within the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall refer the member to a recruiter of the Department for consideration of open positions in the specialty and geography of interest to the member.

"(2) TIMING.—Any referral of a member of the Armed Forces conducted under paragraph (1) shall be made not earlier than one year before the separation of the member from the Armed Forces.

"(c) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Any identification of a member of the Armed Forces under subsection (a) or referral of such member under subsection (b) shall not be construed as a guarantee of employment of such member with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"(d) REPORTS.—Not later than each of one year and two years after the date of the enactment of the Hire Veteran Health Heroes Act of 2021, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the program established under subsection (a).

"(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

"(1) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.—The term 'appropriate committees of Congress' means—

"(A) the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate; and

"(B) the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives.

"(2) HEALTH CARE OCCUPATION.—The term 'health care occupation' means an occupation for which an individual may be appointed for employment with the Department of Veterans Affairs under section 7401 of title 38, United States Code."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from

California (Mr. TAKANO) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on S. 894.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Senator BRAUN and Senator HASSAN's S. 894, the Hire Veteran Health Heroes Act.

We all know that there are many ways for our military personnel to continue to serve after they separate from Active Duty. This bill provides a potential pathway for those servicemembers in healthcare occupations to move into careers with VA.

It couldn't come at a better time because we know VA has significant hiring needs to ensure it can continue providing high-quality, timely care to our veterans.

S. 894 directs VA to consult with the Department of Defense and establish a program for identifying separating servicemembers who are interested in healthcare positions at VA. VA would then refer interested servicemembers to VA recruiters for consideration of open positions in the specialty and geographic locations veterans prefer.

I see this as a win-win situation for veterans and for VA, and exactly the kind of ideal employment warm hand-off we all talk about.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support S. 894, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 894, the Hire Veteran Health Heroes Act of 2021. This bill was introduced by Senator MIKE BRAUN of Indiana. The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATTA) introduced the House companion bill. I thank them both for their efforts on this excellent piece of legislation.

The Hire Veteran Health Heroes Act would help accomplish three important goals:

The first is supporting servicemembers as they transition out of the military.

The second is helping veterans find meaningful work in their civilian lives.

The third is ensuring that VA medical facilities are well staffed to provide timely, high-quality care to veterans.

This bill would require VA to work with DOD to identify separating servicemembers with backgrounds in healthcare, and it would require VA to refer those servicemembers who are interested in working in the VA